

# Men

continued from page 7

of the best teams, and it's going to show down the stretch."

While it is nice to get ranked at this point, Kent is quick to point out that the season is far from over. Oregon's two games in Arizona this weekend will be the end of only the first half of conference play.

"I don't worry too much about rankings," Kent said. "If people don't recognize we deserve to be ranked, that's fine because the bottom line is where you end up at the end of the year. We want to be a team that has the opportunity to be in a postseason play, and once you get in the tournament, everyone starts on equal ground

with 64 teams and away you go."

### Darius and the dagger

Oregon's win against UCLA was anchored by Wright's play. During the Ducks' pivotal 18-0 run in the second half, Oregon's senior was either pushing the ball upcourt or putting a three-point dagger into the Bruins' heart.



Wright's performance definitely got the attention of Kent, but it wasn't as if the Ducks' coach was surprised.

"You have to realize that he has been averaging 37-38 minutes a game, and he continues to be the energizer that gets the

movement in transition," Kent said. "For him to come away with the game he had against UCLA, with 17 points, nine as-

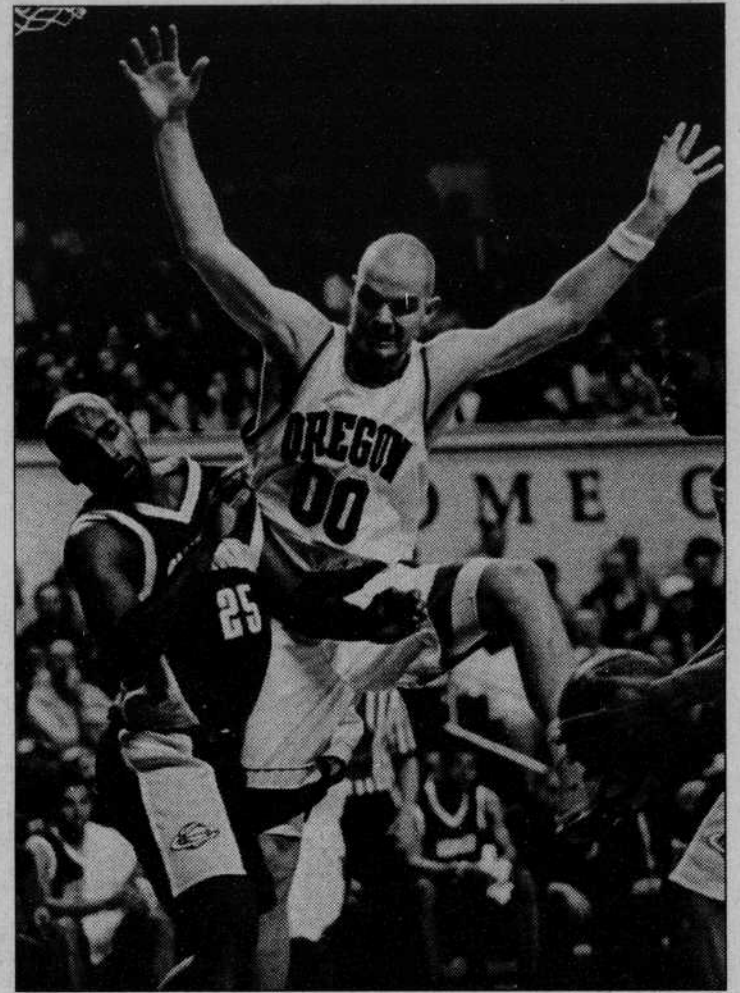
**“If we don't get ranked, we don't get ranked. But we know we're one of the best teams, and it's going to show down the stretch.”**

**Darius Wright**  
point guard

sists, in the second game of a two-game weekend was amazing. "But I said coming into the year that I thought he was one of the best point guards on the West Coast, and I still feel that way."

The Ducks were unable to hit any three-point shots in the first half of Saturday's contest against UCLA, but Wright made the Bruins pay in the second half with three big shots from behind the arc.

"Darius really stepped up and hit some threes," said Pac-10 player-of-the-week A.D. Smith. "Almost any time we're on the floor, we've got four guys that can be an outside threat. Three-point shooting really opens things up for the rest of our offense."



Scott Barnett Emerald

Pac-10 player-of-the-week A.D. Smith is a leader on the floor and in the box scores.



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## MLB suspends Rocker until May 1

By Ronald Blum  
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — John Rocker was suspended until May 1 by baseball commissioner Bud Selig on Monday for racial and ethnic remarks that "offended practically every element of society."

The Atlanta reliever also was fined \$20,000 and ordered to undergo sensitivity training for disparaging foreigners, homosexuals and minorities in a magazine interview.

The players' union said it intends to fight the ruling.

"Major league baseball takes seriously its role as an American institution and the important social responsibility that goes with it," Selig said.

"We will not dodge our responsibility. Mr. Rocker should understand that his remarks offended practically every element of society and brought dishonor to him-

self, Atlanta and major league baseball. The terrible example set by Mr. Rocker is not what our great game is about and, in fact, is a profound breach of the social compact we hold in such high regard."

The players' association said it expects to file a grievance over the penalty, believed to be the longest against a baseball player for an action not related to drug use since Lenny Randle of Texas got 30 days in March 1977 for punching his manager, Frank Lucchesi.

"I do not believe it is appropriate that I should be harshly disciplined for my misguided speech unaccompanied by any conduct on my part," Rocker said in a statement released by his agents. "I have previously apologized for my unfortunate remarks and stand by my apology."

A grievance would force the matter before Shaym Das, the sport's new independent arbitrator.

"We have been in consultation with Mr. Rocker and it is our present intention to appeal," said Gene Orza, the union's No. 2 official. "It is literally unprecedented to impose a penalty on a player for pure speech, offensive though the speech may be. That, coupled with the magnitude of the penalty, just as unprecedented, makes us optimistic about the outcome of the appeal."

While the suspension covers 73 days starting with the opening of spring training, the season doesn't start until April 3, meaning Rocker would miss the first 28 days of the season. A suspension will not affect his salary, expected to be between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

Rocker may go to extended spring training starting April 3 and will be allowed to pitch in the minor leagues during the first month of the season. If the suspension isn't shortened, he would return for a May 1 game at Los Angeles.

"It really is about what I anticipated happening," Atlanta general manager John Schuerholz said of the penalty.

The 25-year-old pitcher was barred from joining Atlanta at spring training. A high-ranking baseball official, speaking on the

condition he not be identified, said the commissioner's office did not want Rocker to report with other Atlanta pitchers and catchers, thus minimizing the number of media descending on Kissimmee, Fla., when camp opens Feb. 17.

Rob Manfred, baseball's executive vice president for labor relations, disputed that, saying it was not a factor.

"It comes as kind of a shock," Atlanta pitcher Rudy Seanez said. "I just think that's pretty harsh."

Atlanta president Stan Kasten said he hoped Rocker will not appeal.

"I hope we can separate the legal ramifications from John personally," Kasten said. "It's most important to get through this thing and get through it successfully. That's much more important than winning a couple of days."

Rocker's comments drew a strong response from Atlanta executive Hank Aaron and civil rights groups. Several Atlanta players have said they expect Rocker to have a difficult time when he rejoins the team.

"We believe that even after this process is complete, there are still two hurdles that remain," Kasten said. "John still has to reconcile himself with his teammates. After that, he has to reconcile himself with the community. It's not automatic. But with the right effort and the right attitude, I think it's possible."

The pitcher, whose fine will go to groups that promote diversity, was ordered by Selig on Jan. 6 to undergo psychological tests, but the results of those tests have not been disclosed.

Rocker said in a Sports Illustrated story published last month that he would never play for a New York team because he didn't want to ride a subway train "next to some queer with AIDS." He also said, "I'm not a very big fan of foreigners. ... How the hell did they get in this country?"

He also called a black teammate a "fat monkey."

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